

42/CS/CP

Country Profile

Thailand

April 1974

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

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26

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COUNTRY PROFILE Integrated perspective of the subject country • Chronology • Area brief • Summary map

THE SOCIETY Social structure • Population • Labor • Health • Living conditions • Social problems • Religion • Education • Public information • Artistic expression

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS Political evolution of the state • Governmental strength and stability • Structure and function • Political dynamics • National policies • Threats to stability • The police • Intelligence and security • Countersubversion and counterinsurgency capabilities

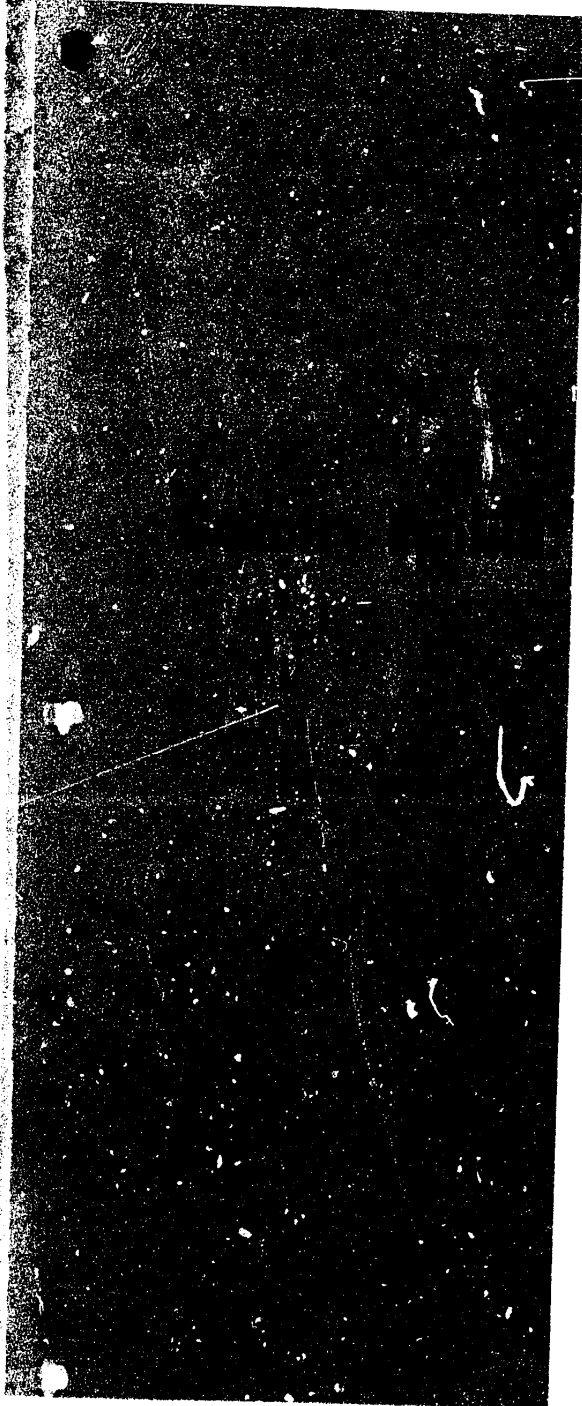
THE ECONOMY Appraisal of the economy • Its structure—agriculture, fisheries, forestry, fuels and power, metals and minerals, manufacturing and construction • Domestic trade • Economic policy and development • International economic relations

TRANSPORTATION AND

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MILITARY GEOGRAPHY Topography and climate • Military geographic regions • Strategic areas • Internal routes • Approaches: land, sea, air

ARMED FORCES The defense establishment • Joint activities • Ground forces • Naval forces • Air forces • Paramilitary



Thailand

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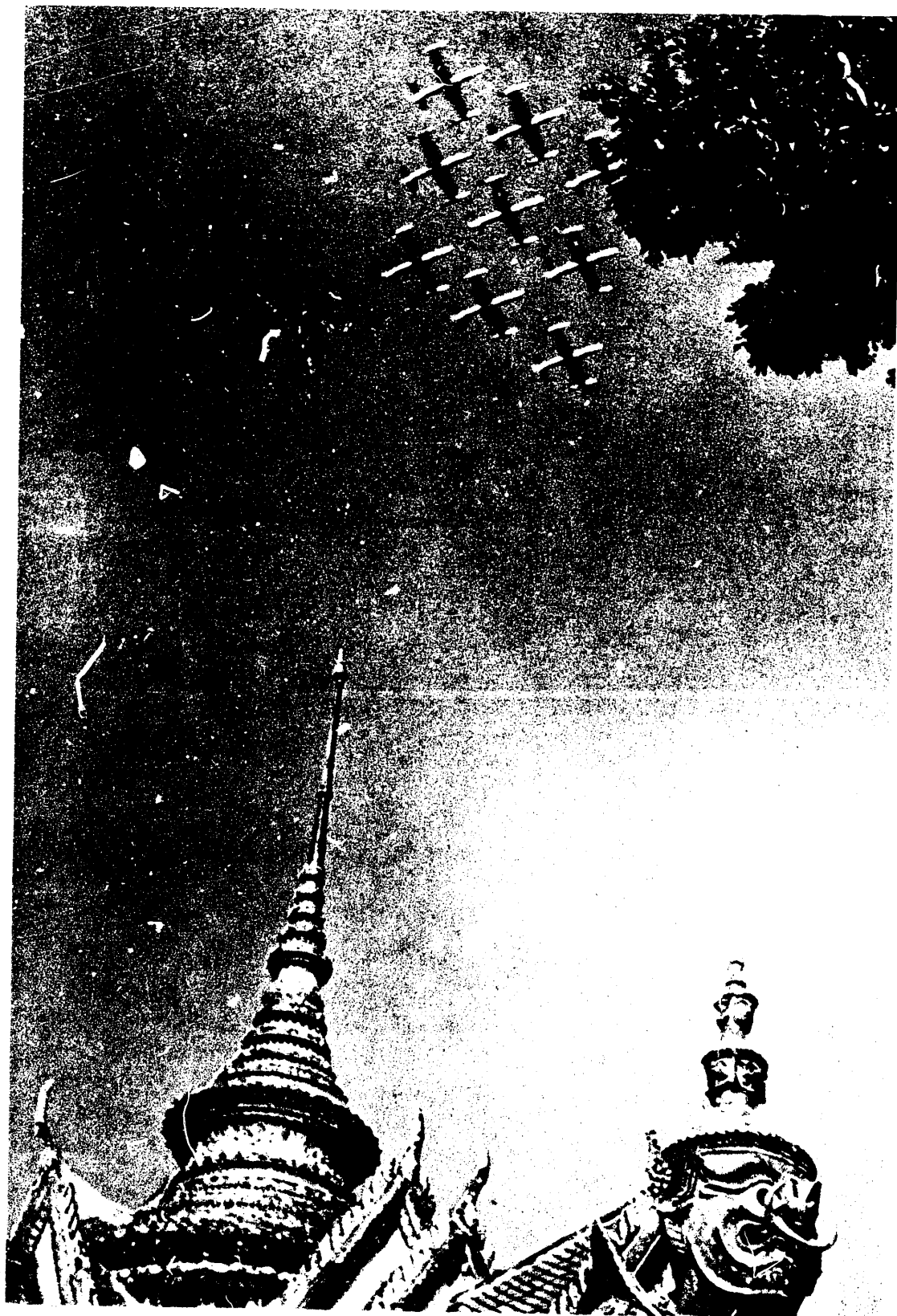
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Tradition and Change

In October 1973 the people of Thailand experienced unprecedented violence in their political life when popular demonstrations against the government of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachon brought about the downfall of a 10-year military regime and the exile of its three leading families. Against strong traditions of respect for authority and complaisance toward all officialdom, a broad element of the educated Thai population—students, labor groups, some parts of the bureaucracy, prominent citizens, and the press—joined ranks to express disaffection and deepening distrust of their government.

Although the military regime shared no power with the people, it had generally avoided repressive steps while building a stable government under firm executive control. It often showed remarkable flexibility, incorporating into government programs many of the ideas and some of the leaders of the opposition. For a long time the regime was neither very popular nor very unpopular, was firm but not brutal, and tolerated quite a lot of dissent although it did not like it. However, from November 1971, when the regime ended a 3-year experiment in semiparticipatory government, until late 1973 the consensus grew that Thailand was being badly governed, that its top officials should leave, and that the military establishment's long domination of the nation's political life should be terminated. Student agitation was the catalyst that finally brought the government down.

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While repudiating one fixture of their recent history by removing the military's hold over the government, the dissenting Thais showed their continued affection for another constant in their political life: the monarch. Although all power is exercised in the name of the King, he has had very little real institutional power in his own right since a 1932 military-civilian coup ended the absolute monarchy. The stature of the monarchy has grown immeasurably, however, since the coronation in 1950 of the popular King Phumiphon—ninth in the Chakri line which has held the throne since 1782. A hardworking ruler, King Phumiphon keeps himself well informed on both international and domestic issues. He uses his position shrewdly to influence the tone of government through private audiences with officials, and on occasion he has taken public actions which have guided Thailand toward a more democratic system of government. The King has developed a strong rapport with the student community; the student leaders had his support in the events leading to the downfall of the Thanom government, and they continue to look to him for guidance.

The King chose Thanom's successor, the civilian educator and Supreme Court Justice Sanya Thammasak, and also played the key role in forming an interim legislature which has been charged with drafting a new constitution. He picked more than 2,300 citizens from different walks of life to meet and choose the new 299-man assembly which replaces the old parliament. Reflecting the shifts which have taken place in the internal power equation, only 12% of the new assembly are from the military compared with

67% of its predecessor. There is continuity between the new and the old in that nearly half of the Sanya cabinet are holdovers from the Thanom regime, a number of them military men. Nonetheless, the new constitution being drafted in early 1974 is expected to

reflect such civilian concerns as provision for a bicameral legislature with an elected lower house, distinct separation of power, a deeper commitment to social welfare, and protection against the excesses of martial law.

Bangkok at the Center

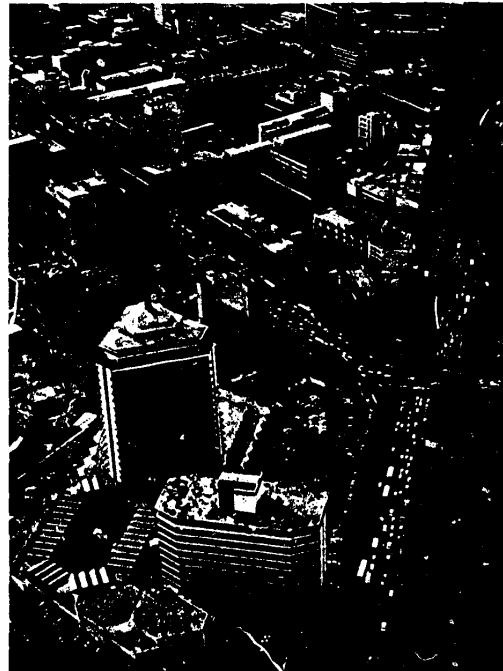
Thailand's capital city, Bangkok—hub of commerce and transportation, residence of the monarchy, and focus of political, intellectual, and cultural life—typifies the conventional Thai attitude toward continuity and change. Its founder, Rama I, first of the Chakri rulers, chose its location in 1782 to forestall a Burmese attack similar to the one 15 years before that had demolished the old capital of Ayutthaya, yet he wanted Bangkok to resemble Ayutthaya as closely as possible. He summoned experts who could recall details of the old city, had some of its remaining buildings razed and the bricks brought down the river, and ordered *klongs* (canals) cut—including one wide enough for boat racing which had been so popular in Ayutthaya.

Eventually, in 1972, the "twin cities" of Bangkok and nearby Thon Buri—site of a temporary capital prior to Bangkok's construction—merged into one city-province under a governor who is also mayor of the single municipality. In the last four decades, their area has increased sixfold and their population, quintupled, reaching a total of 3.7 million in 1972 that made the joint city one of the world's largest. If its 6.5% yearly increase rate continues, Bangkok-Thon Buri's population will reach 6 million by 1980 and exceed 11 million by 1990.

Long before the merger, over half the nation's urban population already lived in Bangkok and the city's primacy rate (i.e., population of the largest city as a percentage of the total population of the four largest cities) was in the 90's—one of the highest in the world. To merit primacy, says one urbanologist, a city "must not only be the most populous in the area, but

more importantly, the most powerful and evocative of rewards and splendors." Bangkok qualifies on all counts.

Political influence literally begins and ends in Bangkok, and other cities and provinces generally blow with the capital's political winds. Major univer-



sities such as Chulalongkorn and Thammasat—whose students spearheaded the Thanom regime's overthrow in October 1973—are in Bangkok, as are the best in Thai theater, dancing, music, and the graphic arts. It is also one of the few Thai cities to have a daily newspaper—in this case several in Thai, Chinese, and English. Bangkok is where automobile, railroad, and airline routes converge. Don Muang is the nation's only major international airport, and the seaport of Bangkok handles over 90% of all inbound and outbound sea cargo.

Bangkok's superiority crumbles, however, at the infrastructure level. Traffic jams not only clog the streets but generate noise, vibrations, and exhaust fumes which endanger human life and national art treasures alike. Frequently dust from a cement plant, black smoke from a powerplant, and sawdust from several sawmills combine with other fumes to cover the metropolitan area with a veil of yellow smog. Garbage and other refuse in the *klongs* are further health hazards, particularly when the water recedes in the dry season. Government measures to tackle these problems have been sporadic and ineffective.

The decade of the 1960's witnessed a significant degree of economic diversification, which greatly affected Bangkok. During the period 1960-71, total employment in agriculture rose by 25% and non-agricultural occupations by 78%. As a proportion of the total work force, the nonagricultural sector increased from 17% to 23%; the greatest increase in employment was experienced in services and commerce. This buildup of the nonagricultural work force was primarily based on the metropolitan area of Bangkok, where about 40% of the industrial labor force and 62% of all commercial workers are active.

The rapid growth of the Bangkok-Thon Buri metropolitan area has strained existing welfare services there, and created housing and some unemployment problems. The growth of slum conditions has become acute. By mid-1971 there were an estimated 100,000 families in the capital area living in slums. On the waterfront, migrant laborers live on sampans or in shacks; many of the shacks are constructed of bamboo and scrap materials and are periodically swept away by floods or destroyed by fire. Other squatters live under bridges, in buildings under construction, or wherever shelter can be found. The government has embarked on a few projects to improve public facilities in this area, but top priority has been given to socioeconomic development in the rural areas—in response to other economic and political realities.

Only 14% of Thailand's total population live in urban areas, and the overwhelming preponderance of economic production and national life goes on in the countryside. Agriculture still employs over 70% of the labor force; together with processing and commercial activities related to farming and forestry—some of which occur within urban areas, of course—it accounts for more than two-fifths of gross domestic product (GDP). In 1972, 51% of export earnings stemmed from sales of just five commodities: rice, rubber, tin, corn, and tapioca. Other agricultural products made up the bulk of the remainder, as exports of manufactured products is small. Thailand's achievement of an average annual rate of growth of about 5% in agricultural output during 1962-72—matched by few countries in Southeast Asia—was sufficient to provide for an increasing consumption of food by the rapidly growing population and still maintain surpluses for export.

The rural areas are also important because economic hardship in some areas has bred discontent, and because the government has in the past seriously neglected its relationships with minority ethnic groups. Economic retardation is particularly apparent in northeastern Thailand, which contains about one-third of the nation's population. There economic and social development has been impeded by poor soil, an unreliable water supply, insufficient irrigation facilities, inadequate roads and communications, and a shortage of health and educational facilities. Although the population is ethnic Thai, most people in this area speak Lao or regional Thai dialects. They are culturally different from the Thais who live on the delta and wide alluvial plain of the Chao Phraya river system in central Thailand which is the country's rice bowl and the center of traditional Thai civilization. Despite the government's increased attention to assimilation and development in recent years, many people in the northeast still feel ignored and discriminated against.

Thailand's mountainous northern provinces are inhabited largely by non-Thai hill tribes. The government generally ignored the hill tribes until 1959 when it prohibited the cultivation of the opium poppy—their traditional livelihood—and moved to stop the slash-and-burn agricultural practices which were destroying significant areas of forest. Considerable antigovernment hostility persists despite the government's later adoption of a Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Program, and the efforts of the King to show his concern for their well-being and security by making personal visits.

Ethnic problems also afflict the nation's southernmost area, the Thai part of the Malay Peninsula, a 500-mile-long sliver of land extending southward from Bangkok, which has a substantial minority of ethnic Malays attracted by the area's tin deposits and rare woods. The peninsula's location astride the international sealanes joining China and India has long attracted the attention of seagoing powers bent on using its narrow waist as a shortcut. The merits of digging a canal across the narrow point of the peninsula, the Kra Isthmus, are debated both internationally and domestically. Japan and other major shipping nations favor a canal; Singapore, strategically located on the Strait of Malacca, firmly opposes an alternate waterway. The Thai Government believes a canal would benefit the nation in the short run, with canal construction employing as many as 1 million Thais. But in the long term, the government fears a canal might spur separatist sentiment among the peninsula's Malay residents.

Despite the many problems they face, the Thais have through the centuries maintained a continuity and a durability of culture due to many factors. From earliest times, the Thais' economy has been based on rice cultivation, which promotes communal life, and their religion has successfully blended Buddhism, Hinduism, and animism. There has never been cause for a peasant revolt or class warfare, even though Thai governments have always been elitist and Thai rulers never really accountable to the people. Unlike its neighbors, Thailand has been subjected to foreign rule only for rare and brief periods. The nation's ability to absorb diverse influences still holds, as seen in the adoption of European and American theories of government, administrative methods, and economic techniques during the 20th century. The Thais still interpret new ideas and methods from their own point of view, adapt them to match traits in their own character, and through it all maintain a distinctively Thai ethos.

The Rice Mystique

Although Bangkok is the nerve center of Thailand, the nation's heart beats in the countryside where most Thais live in villages along the rivers and canals and grow rice as their ancestors did. For at least half the population, rice is the only or principal source of livelihood. It grows on nearly 90% of the farms, takes up 70% of all cultivated land, amounts to 40% of the total value of farm production, and generates 10% of the country's GDP. Rice makes up about one-fifth of the value of all Thai exports and accounts for one-sixth of all rice in world trade.

True rice (*oryza sativa*) can grow like wheat on dry slopes and in varying depths of water. Thailand has ricefields at altitudes nearly 4,500 feet above sea level as well as in the brackish tidal flats of the Gulf of Thailand. Most Thai rice is the wet or lowland type grown by transplanting, and two-thirds of the total rice area is planted in nonglutinous rice. The area of

highest yields, but the smallest planted acreage, is in the north which stresses glutinous rice.

Rice directly affects Thai life at all levels. It is the infant's first solid food, and is ritually burned on the funeral pyre. Rice is the chief part of every meal, an important source of cash for the farmer and revenue for the government, a major topic of village conversation, the goal of most work, and the basis for holidays, festivals, and even religious fervor. At harvest time especially, villagers share tasks, working together in the fields up to 14 hours at a time. Traditionally, a handful of grain from each rice crop is returned from the buyer to the farmer to assure the next year's crop.

Since the mid-19th century, rice growing has played a major role in shaping the economy and boosting the population. Peasants who for years planted just enough rice for their own families began to grow more when they learned of the wide interest in their high-

quality product. Large foreign purchases pushed Thailand from its subsistence level into an exchange economy in the world marketplace, and this in turn spurred both a population influx (largely from China) and a rise in fertility. In the century 1850-1950, rice acreage rose by 500% from 5.8 million to 34.6 million *rai* (2.2 *rai* = 1 acre).

This striking gain was generated largely by the initiative of independent farmers, but was also aided by the government. The old custom that anyone might claim all the state's land he could till was formalized in the Consolidated Land Act of 1908, which mentioned the amount one could "turn to profit," and the Land Act of 1936, which limited such acreage to 50 *rai*. In both cases the farmer could receive title after he tilled the land for 3 years. An incentive land tax, moreover, encouraged farmers to risk cultivating new land in less fertile regions. These customs and laws encouraged the growth both of rice itself and of a nation of small, independent owner-farmers. Even the emphasis placed between 1950 and 1960 on diversifying crops did not deter the rise in paddy yields or acreage which, by 1972, were respectively 31% and 30% higher than in 1962. The increase in yield was due to improved irrigation, seeds, fertilizers, and farm equipment.

In the early 1970's, however, several clouds on the horizon were threatening the farmer's traditional role in Thailand, and perhaps, ultimately, the values of the rice-based culture. Since about 1968 the Thai population, expanding by 3.2% or 1 million persons a year, has consumed nearly 90% of each year's rice crop. At this rate, 4 million more tons of rice must be raised over the next decade just to meet domestic needs. Moreover, farmers already use most of the potential paddy area. Increasing rice yields per *rai* on already developed land—the obvious answer—has been stymied by the government's efforts to develop industry. As a result of competition for funds, the government has failed to provide enough irrigation, fertilizers, storage facilities, and agricultural credit; it has also tolerated or backed some policies that hamper or impoverish farmers. This situation could be solved by a change in government priorities.

Water control is a major problem in Thailand, as it is throughout tropical monsoon Asia where maximum rice yields require some 70 inches of rain in the June-November growth and maturing period. Thailand regularly gets this much rain only in the peninsular lowland and southern coast, and areas where forests have been destroyed receive and retain much less than they used to. Irrigation, moreover,



covers only about 17% of total rice land. As a result, some kinds of high-yielding, short-stemmed "miracle" rice that need controlled watering account for only 2.2% of arable land, and three other types are being tried and a fourth developed to grow at different water levels. Even in the fertile Chao Phraya Plain, where one-fifth of Thailand's rice is grown, the farmers cannot doublecrop for lack of suitable water control. Irrigation projects prior to the current Third Plan (1971-76) emphasized building more dams rather than providing ditches and dikes to channel water from existing dams to the farm lands. Two dams built in Khon Kaen province in the northeast, for instance, did not help provide water for the farmers, one provided only electricity and the other had no feeder canals.

Fertilizer problems also hamper rice growing. Exorbitant prices force Thai farmers to use less fertilizer than any other Asians except the Burmese—about 8.6 kilograms per hectare of arable land compared with over 12 in India and Indonesia, 19.5 in the Philippines, and 60.8 in Western Malaysia.

Poor storage facilities also depress the income of farmers who, unable to store rice for long in handwoven baskets, must sell it soon after harvest when prices are low. Generally they sell about 60% of their unmilled crop directly to mills, local dealers, or itinerant buyers; about one-third of the rest is used for seed and feed. Poor storage can also discourage doublecropping, at least in areas where a second crop is harvested while damp. In mid-1973, growers in five Central Plains provinces found few buyers for their damp paddy rice since both the government and most private merchants—lacking grain-drying equipment—were uninterested.

Some government rice policies, while well-intentioned and helpful to other Thais, have proved disastrous to farmers. The old "rice premium" tax on exports long raised revenues for the government (about US\$15 million annually) and kept rice prices low for consumers, but farmers received less than half the export price. The farmers' share from the revised "rice premium" tax—which has been levied since late 1972 on only about one-fifth of all rice exports—is still minuscule, but at least the government has announced plans to reinvest much of its tax proceeds into improving agriculture. The late 1973 crackdown on rice hoarders is making more rice available to the public at reasonable prices but does not help farmers whose profits on this particular crop were long since sliced off by middlemen. With no financial reserves and no rice stocks of their own, the farmers have simply tightened their belts.

Rice growing is still all-important to Thailand, but the rice mystique is wearing a bit thin as modern problems mount. Particularly damaging in the early 1970's were the severe droughts which forced some farmers—with only limited agricultural credit available to them under government programs—to borrow money at calamitous interest rates. Where the land speculators who provide money have required deed as collateral, many farmers have been reduced from small landowners to impoverished tenants. Some have accepted this fate stoically, but others have left the land to seek uncertain fortunes in Bangkok and other cities. In July 1973 the *Bangkok Post* found that the children of 80% of the farmers in four Central Plains delta provinces had left to try their luck in the cities. The conventional wisdom has it that they would rather be poor laborers than poor farmers.

As the Old Ways Change

The ferment in Thailand since students toppled the Thanom regime in October 1973 raises questions about the traditional happy-go-lucky, live-and-let-live Thai psyche, epitomized by the expression *mai pen rai* or "never mind." The Thais' emotional security stems partly from a long, permissive infancy with no rigorous disciplines. A child generally learns to walk, swim, and gain motor coordination on his own, and probably gains a healthy self-reliance in so doing. Adult Thais feel little pressure to conform to any work ethic or need for self-castigation. This kind of background encourages respect for authority without resentment.

Buddhism also shapes Thai conduct. Unlike the Christian for example, the Buddhist does not have an accountability to a Creator who will decide the fate of his eternal soul. Being evil, grasping, or unkind merely extends one's own suffering, and it is only good acts, charity, knowledge, and meditation that can free one. The Thai Buddhist senses the world's impermanence and the lack of reality based on outward signs, and is inclined to minimize facts and things. The most complex situations resolve themselves because the stream of life continually shifts and rearranges one's positions. Amid such flux—where it would be absurd to try to be certain and exact, or to plan everything—only the present and the immediate are real. To most Thais the concept of time is vague; and rather than actors, they tend to be acted upon.

There is no doubt that the overlay of Western customs and artifacts superimposed through the years has greatly altered Thai life. Tradition still prevails in the countryside, but Westernization has made headway in Bangkok and a mixture of the two has changed the lives of smalltown residents. Superficial innovations include: a network of highways where there were once just quiet canals and winding elephant trails; television antennas, radio towers, and microwave parabolas dotting a landscape formerly dominated by forests and temple spires; chrome and plastic furniture supplanting lacquer-ware and inlaid mother-of-pearl tables and cabinets; and cars and air-

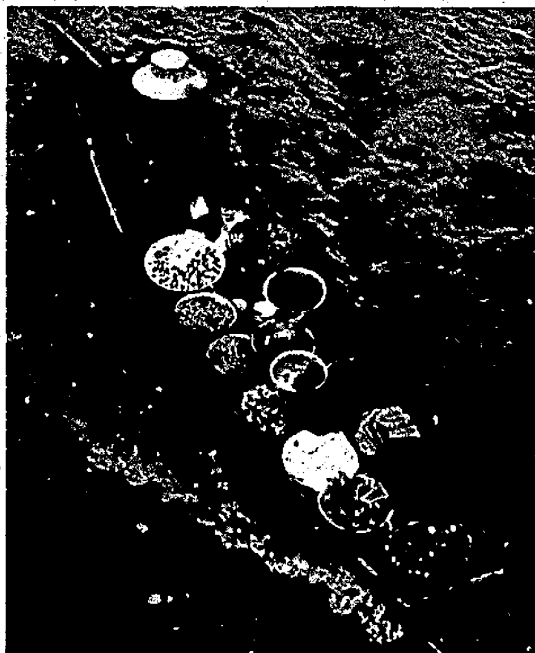
planes figuring in temple murals along with traditional Buddhist figures.

Modernization has also brought new kinds of people and conditions. What used to be an insular, little-known kingdom finds itself bustling with tourists, businessmen, military men, international agency representatives, news correspondents, and assorted kinds of Western expatriates. Many of these outsiders introduced new ideas and new technologies which helped generate massive new wealth in the country. A 44% increase in individual Thai income in one decade has brought increased demands for luxury goods all over the country, with mixed reactions from Thai intellectuals.

Western political ideas have been part of the scene since the 1932 coup ended the absolute monarchy but have prevailed only infrequently since then. The key features of modern political dynamics in Thailand have been: rule by personality and faction, the coup d'etat as an instrument of change, absence of ideological debate in politics, concentration of political life in Bangkok, abuse of office for personal profit, and distortion of Western parliamentary and electoral forms. Most Thais still view political intrigue and change with a feeling of impotence.

Until recently, military strictures against political assembly of five or more persons, against labor union activity, and against student political demonstrations simply reinforced existing cultural restraints on troublemaking. Many Thais have traditionally equated opposition to the government with insulting the King—virtually a sacrilege in their society. The resulting stability, coupled with the country's rich agricultural resources, has made Thailand a strong, non-Communist cornerstone in Southeast Asia. At the same time, however, general and personal economic setbacks were prompting a fairly wide cross section of the public to decide that perhaps the government should be held accountable. A feeling that the poor no longer had access to justice was also growing throughout the country. Official corruption, even extortion,

became so rife that the government itself sensed that an administrative crisis was at hand. These perceptions were verified by the forced removal of the Thanom regime in October 1973. The new leaders of the nation are now afforded an opportunity to redress popular grievances, but agitation over the same issues could resume in 1974 and beyond if the civilian government does not improve on the performance of its military predecessor.



Another major reason for rising public concern is the nation's astronomical population increase. Before 1900 Thailand took more than a century to increase its population by more than a million, but by 1970 more than that number of persons was being added each year. If the 3.2% annual growth rate continues unabated, Thailand will have about 50 million people by 1980, 70 million by 1990, and nearly 100 million by the end of this century. If the population continues to double every 22 years, the supply of many commodities will have to double or more than double in the same length of time. By 1990, one projection estimates, there would also have to be 16 million additional jobs, 30 thousand more physicians, 5.7 million additional houses, and 160 thousand more teachers. The squeeze is already apparent on the land and in the job market.

The political events which Thailand and its neighbors in Southeast Asia have lived through in the past decade, as well as the recent advent of East-West detente, have also had their effect. Ancient antagonisms toward the Burmese, Vietnamese, and Cambodians persist, but efforts are now being made to open up discussion on population exchange, border disputes, and rival claims for control of productive areas. For most of the post-World War II era, Thailand maintained diplomatic relations with only one Communist country, the Soviet Union, and even in this relationship cultural and trade contacts were kept to a minimum. In 1958, official commercial and cultural contacts with the People's Republic of China were banned. Beginning with 1969, however,

Thailand's outward look gradually altered, first increasing contact with the European Communist countries, and after 1972 with China.

The development of closer ties among Southeast Asian countries has become an important facet of Thai foreign policy. Thailand sees its membership in the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), which it helped form in 1954, chiefly in terms of the United States' defense commitment, now waning. It views other regional organizations—such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—as more closely reflecting indigenous interests, and is active in supporting their goals.

Multiple changes for Thailand, however, do not necessarily mean an end to the country's traditional ways. Throughout its history, religion, culture, mores, and other factors in the nation's life have been altered, but strictly along Thai lines. Even the students who took to the streets in October 1973 did not resemble the radical stereotype: they did not have unduly long hair, wore simple white shirts and dark trousers, were respectful to their elders, assembled in disciplined ranks before classes, and loved and respected the King. Even the Thai version of Buddhism rejects the Buddha's central doctrine of Nirvana, or heaven. The Buddha taught that sorrow attends existence and can end only when desire is extinguished. The Thais, who firmly believe existence is good, place the promised rewards of Buddhism in this life rather than in the next. Thailand's political, economic, and cultural borrowing will probably continue to be selective, and not destructive of national traditions.

Chronology

1851-58

During reign of Mongkut (Rama IV), Siam embarks on modernization program to avoid colonization by Western powers.

1855

April

Siam concludes Bowring Treaty with Great Britain which grants extraterritoriality and trading privileges to British citizens; treaty sets pattern for agreements with United States, France, Denmark, and Portugal, and opens Siam to Western influence.

1868-1910

During reign of Chulalongkorn (Rama V), Siam abolishes slavery, creates modern civil service, and founds Western-type university.

1917

July

Siam enters World War I on side of Allies and sends small military detachment to Europe.

1919

At Paris Peace Conference, Siam asks for abolition of extraterritoriality clauses in its treaties.

1922

United States signs new treaty with Siam renouncing all extraterritorial privileges; by 1926 new treaties with European nations only provisionally curtail Siam's sovereignty; by 1939 all treaties with foreign nations renegotiated to eliminate remaining extraterritoriality and fiscal privileges.

1932

June

Absolute monarchy ended in coup d'etat by civilian and military groups headed by Pridi Phanomyong and Phahon Phonphayahasena, respectively.

1938

December

Phahon retires; Phibun Songkhram becomes Prime Minister.

1941

December

Japan occupies Thailand, forcing limited collaboration during World War II; Phibun declares war on United Kingdom and United States in January 1942.

1944

July

Phibun resigns in face of impending Japanese defeat; Khuang Aphaiwong, backed by Pridi, heads new government.

1946

January

Relations with United Kingdom and United States reestablished.

March

Pridi assumes premiership.

August

Pridi forced out of office for suspected complicity in mysterious death of King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII).

October

Government lifts 1933 ban on Communist Party, after which U.S.S.R. does not veto Thailand's application for United Nations membership.

1947

November

Pridi-supported government ousted in coup by Phibun supporters; Pridi flees to Singapore and Khuang again becomes Prime Minister but under military dominance.

1948

April

Military clique consolidates power by coup, replacing Khuang with Phibun.

1949

February

Pridi returns and fails in coup attempt; flees to Singapore and later to People's Republic of China.

1950

May

King Phumiphon Adunet (Rama IX) crowned, ending regency and marking upturn in prestige of monarchy.

June

Government announces support of U.N. intervention in Korea; later sends about 2,000 troops.

September

U.S. Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement signed.

October

U.S. Military Assistance Agreement signed.

1951

June

Coup by navy thwarted by army and police, but Phibun is weakened; rule assumed by triumvirate consisting of Phibun, Sarit Thanarat, and Phao Sriyanon.

1952

November

Ban reimposed on Communist Party.

1954

September

Thailand signs Manila Pact creating Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

1955

Phibun inaugurates democratization program; free public discussion and new parties permitted.

1957

February

Regime narrowly wins general elections but is accused of election rigging; Sarit dissociates himself from Phibun and Phao.

September

Sarit stages bloodless coup; Phibun and Phao flee into exile; National Assembly dissolved and new elections proclaimed.

December

Sarit clique wins elections; turns government over to acting Prime Minister as he goes abroad for medical treatment.

1958

October

Sarit returns to take personal control of government; proclaims revolutionary government and martial law, dissolves National Assembly, and bans political parties and labor unions.

1959

January

Interim constitution promulgated.

1961

July

Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines form Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), whose activities are later suspended in 1963 over Malaya-Philippines differences.

1962

March

United States pledges to defend Thailand in event of direct Communist aggression, interpreting SEATO obligations as both bilateral and unilateral (Rusk-Thanat agreement).

May

United States sends troops to northeast Thailand when Pathet Lao forces move toward Thailand-Laos border.

1963

December

Sarit dies; Thanom Kittikachorn becomes Prime Minister.

1964

November

Establishment of "Thailand Independence Movement" (TIM) announced by clandestine Communist radio station, *Voice of the People of Thailand*

1965

January

Formation of "Thailand Patriotic Front" (TPF) similarly announced; Peking gives TIM and TPF strong propaganda support, and Thai Communists intensify propaganda and organizational efforts.

June

Communists begin to escalate subversion into active insurgency; guerrilla forces increase terrorist acts and clash with government patrols, primarily in northeast.

1967

August

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed by Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. ASA members agree to gradual phaseout and transfer of programs to ASEAN.

September

Contingent of Thai troops sent to South Vietnam.

1968

June

Constitution promulgated; provides for elections within 8 months for lower house of bicameral legislature.

September

Municipal elections held in Bangkok; opposition Democrat Party overwhelmingly defeats government party.

1969

January

Voice of the People of Thailand announces formation of "Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces."

February

National elections held; government party wins slim plurality.

March

New government formed under Prime Minister Thanom with no changes in key power positions.

1970

March

Bangkok agrees to let Malaysian forces conduct antiguerrilla operations in south Thailand near Malaysia border.

1971

November

Military takes full control of government; Thanom heads new National Executive Council which annuls 1968 constitution, dissolves parliament and cabinet, and declares martial law.

1972

February

Thai troops withdrawn from South Vietnam.

March

Formation of labor "associations" allowed for first time since 1958 ban.

1972

August

Thailand launches "pingpong diplomacy" with People's Republic of China when high economic official Prasit Kanchanawat accompanies Thai team to Peking as "adviser."

December

Interim constitution promulgated; Thanom still heads government as new cabinet and all-appointed parliament named.

1973

October

Military government falls after violent student demonstrations. King appoints Sanya Thammasak as interim Prime Minister.

December

King dissolves parliament, and convenes large group of citizens who elect new interim legislature.

Area Brief

LAND:

Size: 198,000 sq. mi.
Use: 24% in farms, 56% forested, 20% other
Land boundaries: 3,025 mi.

WATER:

Limits of territorial waters (claimed): 12 n. mi.
Coastline: 2,000 mi.

PEOPLE:

Population: 38,438,000, average annual growth rate 3.2% (current)
Ethnic divisions: 75% Thai, 14% Chinese, 11% minorities
Religion: 95.5% Buddhist, 4% Muslim, 0.5% Christian
Language: Thai; English secondary language of elite
Literacy: 70%
Labor force: 88% agriculture, 9% commerce, 3% industry

GOVERNMENT:

Legal name: Kingdom of Thailand
Type: Constitutional monarchy
Capital: Bangkok
Political subdivisions: 71 centrally controlled provinces
Legal system: Based on civil law system, with influences of common law; new constitution promulgated in 1968, suspended 17 November 1971; provisional constitution promulgated December 1972; legal education at Thammasat University; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction
Branches: King is head of state with nominal powers; Prime Minister heads a 22-man cabinet; National Assembly unicameral and appointed by executive branch; judiciary relatively independent except in important political subversive cases
Government leaders: King Phumiphon Adundet; Sanyu-
 Thammasak, Prime Minister; Sukit Nimmanhemini, Deputy Prime Minister
Suffrage: Universal
Elections: Expected within 3-6 months
Political parties and leaders: Dissolved under the revolutionary order 17 November 1971 but may be reestablished at time of new elections
Communists: Strength of illegal Communist Party is about 1,000; Thai Communist insurgents throughout Thailand total about 5,500
Other political or pressure groups: None
Member of: ADB, ASA, ASEAN, ASPAC, Colombo Plan, ECAFE, FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IDA, IFC, IIB, ILO, ITU, Seabeds Committee, SEAMES, SEATO, U.N., UNESCO, UNICEF, UPU, WHO, WMO

ECONOMY:

GDP: \$7.4 billion (1972 est. in current prices), \$200 per capita; estimated 4% real growth in 1972
Agriculture: World's largest rice exporter in 1972; main crops—rice, rubber, corn; almost 100% self-sufficient in food
Fishing: Catch 1.6 million metric tons, exports, 32,000 tons, \$22 million (1971)
Major industries: Agricultural processing, textiles, wood and wood products, cement, tin mining; world's fourth largest tin producer
Shortages: Fuel sources, including coal and petroleum
Electric power: 1,975,000 kw. capacity (1973); 6,300,000 kw.-hr. produced (1973), 170 kw.-hr. per capita
Exports: \$1,063 million (f.o.b., 1972); rice, corn, rubber, tin, cassava, kenaf
Imports: \$1,484 million (c.i.f., 1972); excluding U.S. military imports; machinery and transport equipment, textiles, fuels and lubricants, base metals, chemicals
Major trade partners: Exports—Japan, U.S., Singapore, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Malaysia; imports—Japan, U.S., West Germany, U.K.; about 1% or less trade with Communist countries
Monetary conversion rate: 20.0 baht = US\$1
Fiscal year: 1 October-30 September

COMMUNICATIONS:

Railroads: 2,382 mi. meter gage; 60 mi. double track
Highways: 12,590 mi.; 5,440 mi. paved, 4,820 mi. crushed stone or gravel, 2,330 earth and laterite
Inland waterways: 2,485 mi. principal waterways; 2,306 mi. with navigable depths of 3 ft. or more throughout the year; numerous minor waterways navigable by shallow-draft native craft
Ports: 2 major, 16 minor
Civil air: 26 major transport aircraft
Airfields: 236 total, 179 usable; 54 with permanent-surface runways; 10 with runways 8,000-11,999 ft., 25 with runways 4,000-7,999 ft.; 3 seaplane stations

DEFENSE FORCES:

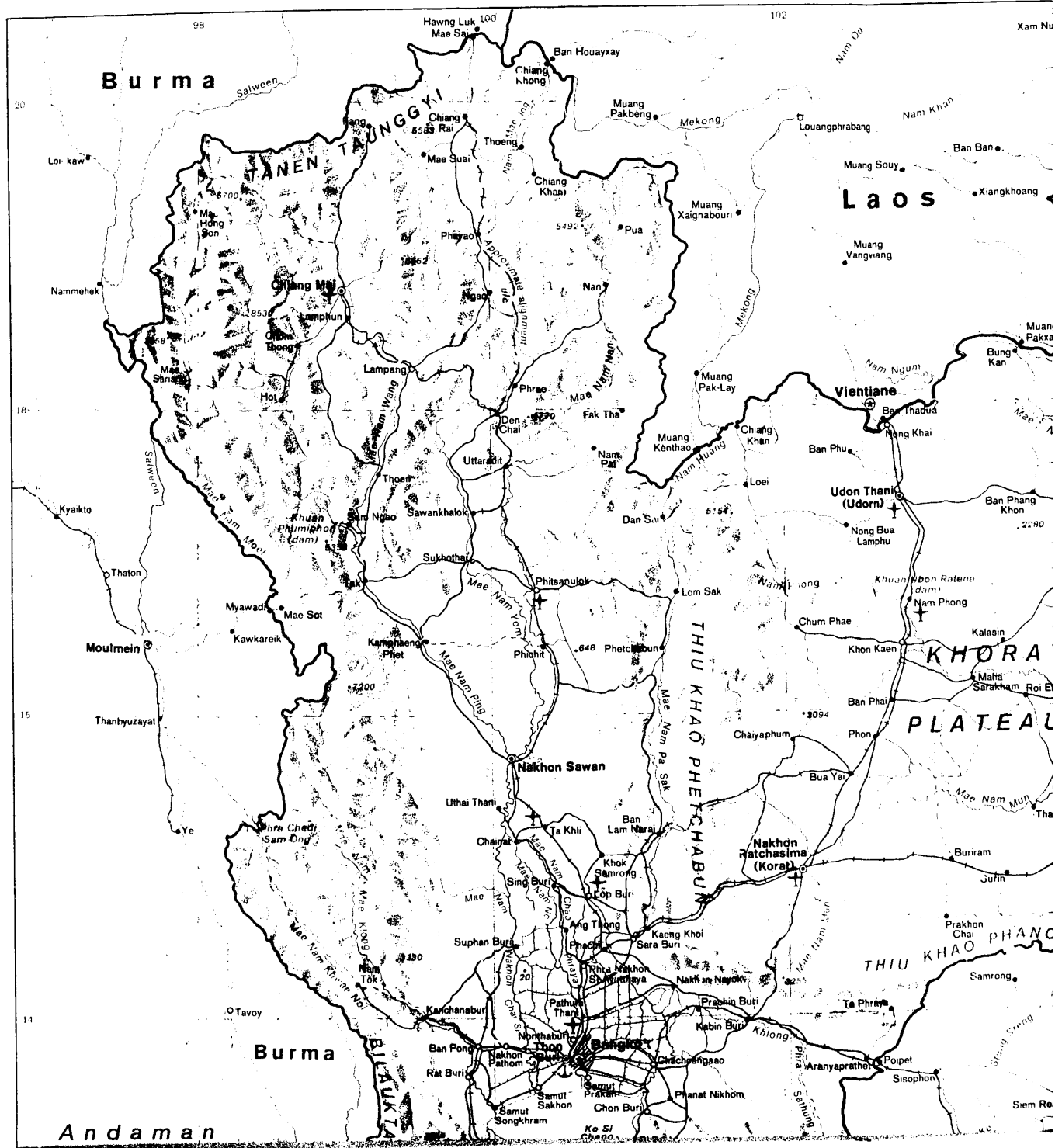
Military manpower: Males 15-49, 9,807,000; 5,930,000 fit for military service; about 424,000 reach military age (18) annually
Military and internal security budget: For fiscal year ending 30 September 1974, \$430 million; 25% of central government budget

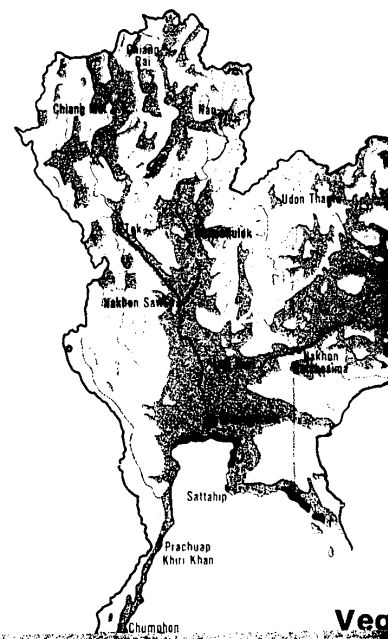
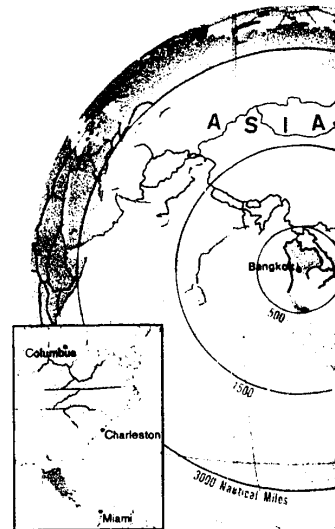
NOTE: This Area Brief is compiled from data appearing in the January 1974 issue of the NIS Basic Intelligence Factbook.

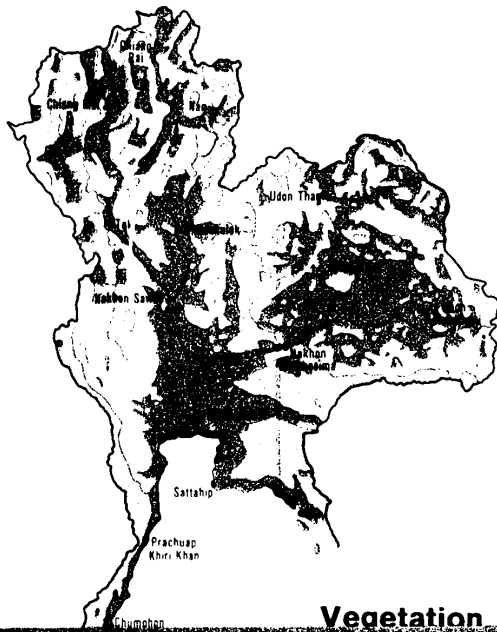
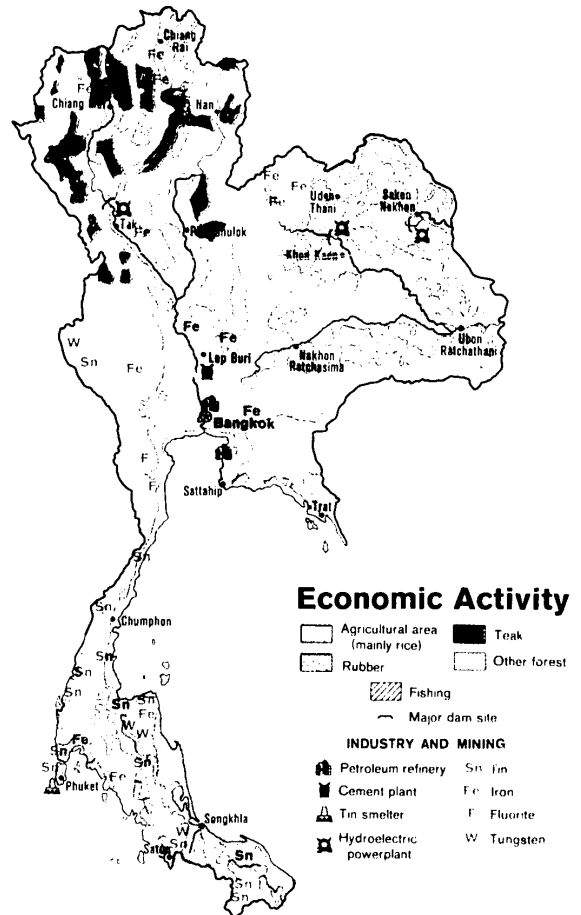
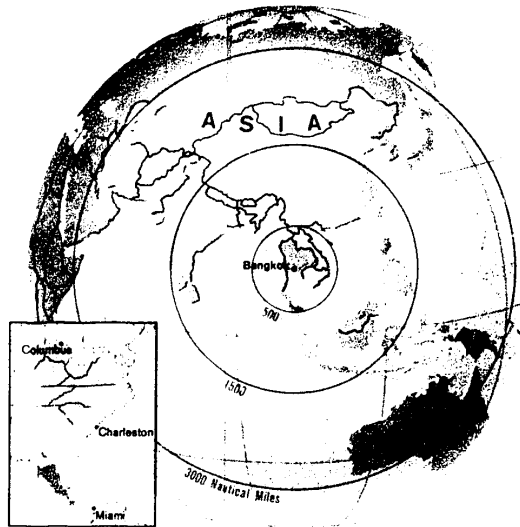
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Places and features referred to in this General Survey

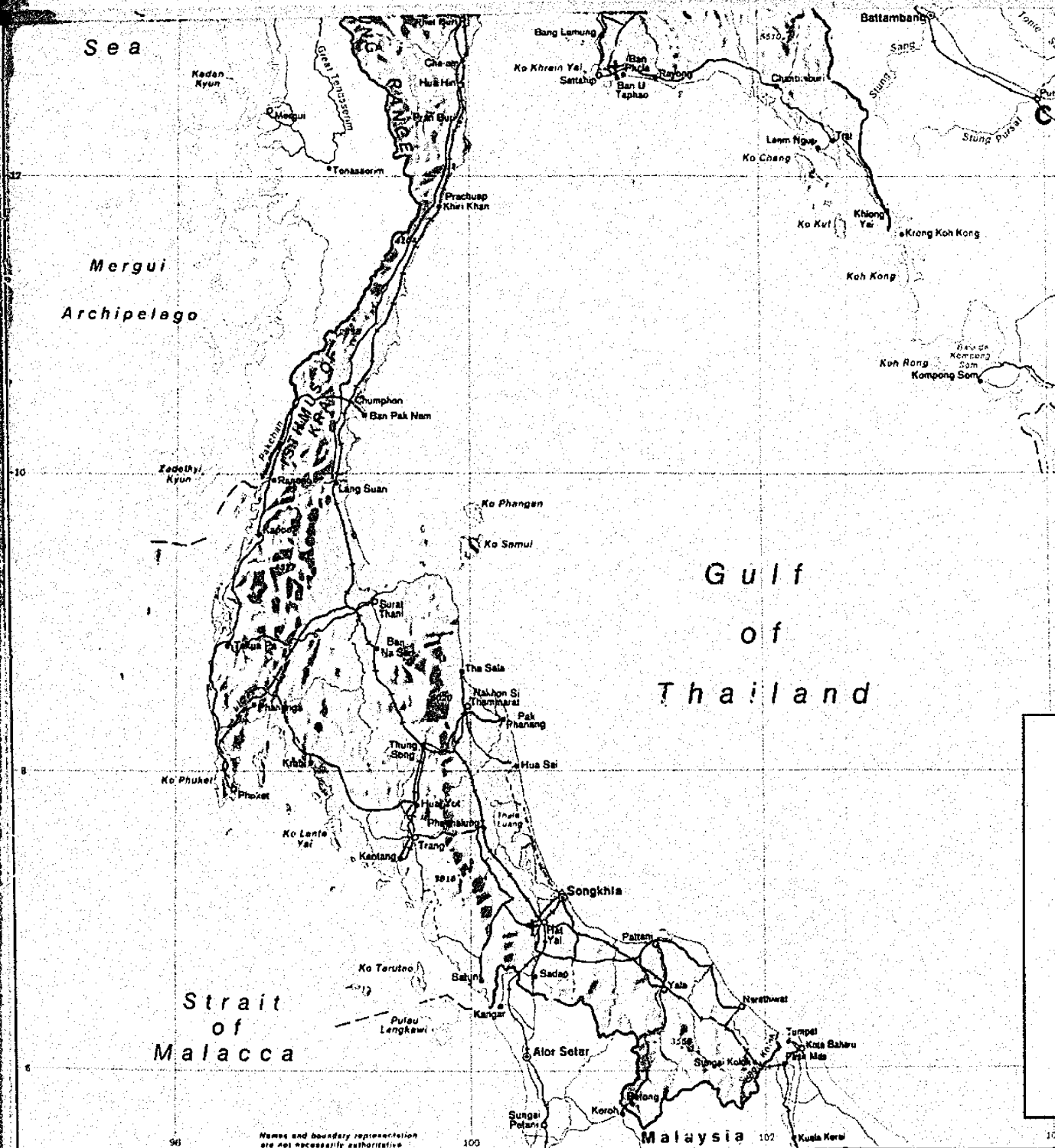
	COORDINATES			COORDINATES	
	° 'N.	° 'E.		° 'N.	° 'E.
Alor Setar, Malaysia.....	6 07	100 22	Nakhon Pathom.....	13 49	100 03
Andaman Sea (<i>sea</i>).....	10 00	95 00	Nakhon Phanom.....	17 24	104 47
Aranyaprathet.....	13 41	102 30	Nakhon Ratchasima (<i>admd</i>).....	15 00	102 10
Ban Bang Chak.....	13 37	100 33	Nakhon Ratchasima.....	14 58	102 07
Ban Bang Na.....	13 40	100 38	Nakhon Sawan.....	15 41	100 07
Brn Don Muang.....	13 55	100 36	Nakhon Si Thammarat.....	8 26	99 58
Bangkok.....	13 45	100 31	Nam Pung, Khuan (<i>dam</i>).....	16 58	103 59
Bang Pakong, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	13 27	100 57	Nan, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	15 42	100 09
Bang Su (<i>rstn</i>).....	13 48	100 33	Narathiwat.....	6 26	101 50
Ban Laem Chabang.....	13 05	100 53	Noi, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	14 22	100 25
Ban Lam Narai.....	15 12	101 08	Nong Khai.....	17 52	102 44







Bannang Sata.....	6 16	101 16	Nong Pla Duk (<i>rstn</i>).....	13 49	99 55
Ban Pak Nam.....	10 26	99 15	Nonthaburi.....	13 50	100 29
Ban Phala.....	12 40	101 02	Pakechan (<i>strm</i>).....	9 58	98 35
Ban Tha Chalaep.....	12 35	102 04	Pak Phanang.....	8 21	100 12
Ba Tha Luang.....	14 33	100 46	Pakxé, Laos.....	15 07	105 47
Ban Tha Phra.....	16 21	102 48	Pa Sak, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	14 21	100 35
Bua Yai (<i>rstn</i>).....	15 35	102 26	Pattani.....	6 52	101 16
Bung Kan.....	18 23	103 37	Phachi.....	14 27	100 43
Chachoengsao.....	13 42	101 05	Phitsanulok.....	16 50	100 15
Chainat.....	15 11	100 08	Phong, Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	16 23	102 56
Chakkarat.....	15 00	102 16	Phrae.....	18 09	100 08
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Chiang Khong.....	20 17	100 24	Phuket, Ko (<i>isl</i>).....	8 00	98 20
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Chok Chai.....	14 44	102 10	Ping, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	15 42	100 09
Chum Phae.....	16 32	102 06	Prachuap Khiri Khan.....	11 49	99 48
Chumphon.....	10 30	99 10	Ran Buri.....	12 23	99 55
Den Chai (<i>rstn</i>).....	17 59	100 03	Ranong.....	9 58	98 38
Det Udom.....	14 54	105 05	Rat Buri.....	13 32	99 48
Dom Noi, Lam (<i>strm</i>).....	15 17	105 28	Sakon Nakhon.....	17 10	104 09
Fang.....	19 55	99 13	Salween River.....	17 30	97 40
Hat Yai.....	7 01	100 28	Samut Prakan.....	13 36	100 36
Hawng Luk, Burma.....	20 28	99 56	Samut Sakhon.....	13 32	100 17
Hua Hin.....	12 34	99 58	Samut Songkhram.....	13 24	100 00
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Kanchanaburi.....	14 01	99 32	Satun.....	6 37	100 04
Kantang.....	7 25	99 31	Savannakhet, Laos.....	16 33	104 45
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Khleng Yai.....	11 46	102 54	Sungai Kolok.....	6 02	101 58
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Klet Kaeo, Chong (<i>marine channel</i>).....	12 45	100 51	Tak.....	16 52	99 08
Klet Kaeo, Ko (<i>isl</i>).....	12 46	100 51	Ta Khli.....	15 15	100 21
Kolok, Sungai (<i>strm</i>).....	6 15	102 05	Takua Pa.....	8 53	98 21
Krabi.....	8 04	98 55	Thawat Buri.....	16 07	103 50
Kra, Isthmus of.....	10 20	99 00	Thon Buri.....	13 43	100 29
Krathing, Khao (<i>mtn</i>).....	13 11	99 43	Thung Song.....	8 09	99 41
Krathing, Khao (<i>hill</i>).....	12 43	100 56	Trat.....	12 14	102 30
Kuala Kerai, Malaysia.....	5 32	102 12	Ubon Ratana (Nam Phong), Khuan (<i>dam</i>).....	16 46	102 37
Laem Chabang, Khao (<i>hill</i>).....	13 05	100 53	Ubon Ratchanthani.....	15 14	104 54
Laem Ngop.....	12 10	102 26	Udon Thani.....	17 26	102 46
Lak Si (<i>rstn</i>).....	13 53	100 35	Uttaradit.....	17 38	100 06
Lampang.....	18 18	99 31	Vientiane, Laos.....	17 58	102 36
Lang Suan.....	9 57	99 04	Warin Chamrap.....	15 12	104 53
Loei.....	17 29	101 35	Xéno, Laos.....	16 41	105 01
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Lop Buri.....	14 48	100 37			
Lop Buri, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	14 22	100 35			
Mae Hong Son.....	19 16	97 56			
Mae Klong, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	13 21	100 00			
Mae Mo (<i>rstn</i>).....	18 13	99 43			
Mae Sariang.....	18 10	97 56			
Mae Sot.....	16 43	98 34			
Makkasan (<i>rstn</i>).....	13 45	100 33			
Malacca, Strait of.....	2 30	101 02			
Malay Peninsula (<i>peninsula</i>).....	6 00	102 00			
Mekong (<i>strm</i>).....	16 25	105 00			
Moei, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	17 50	97 42			
Muang Kénthao, Laos.....	17 44	101 25			
Muang Vangviang, Laos.....	18 56	102 27			
Mukdahan.....	16 32	104 43			
Mun, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	15 19	105 30			
Nakhon Chai Si, Mae Nam (<i>strm</i>).....	13 30	100 16			

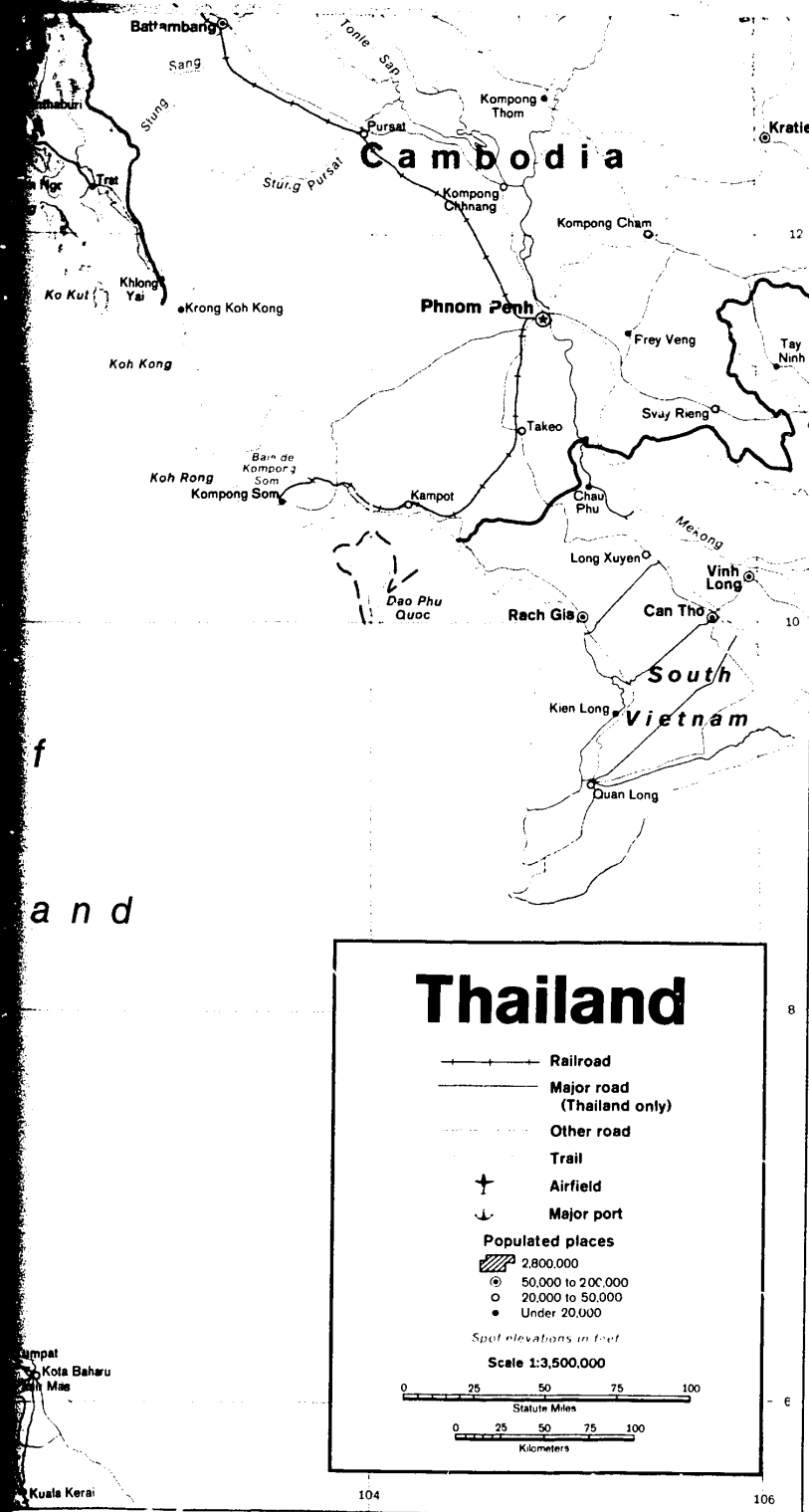


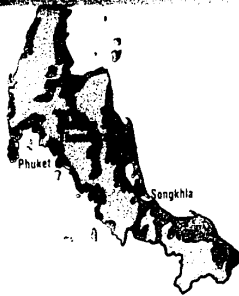
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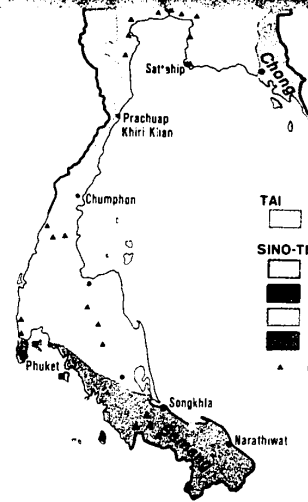
Central Intelligence Agency

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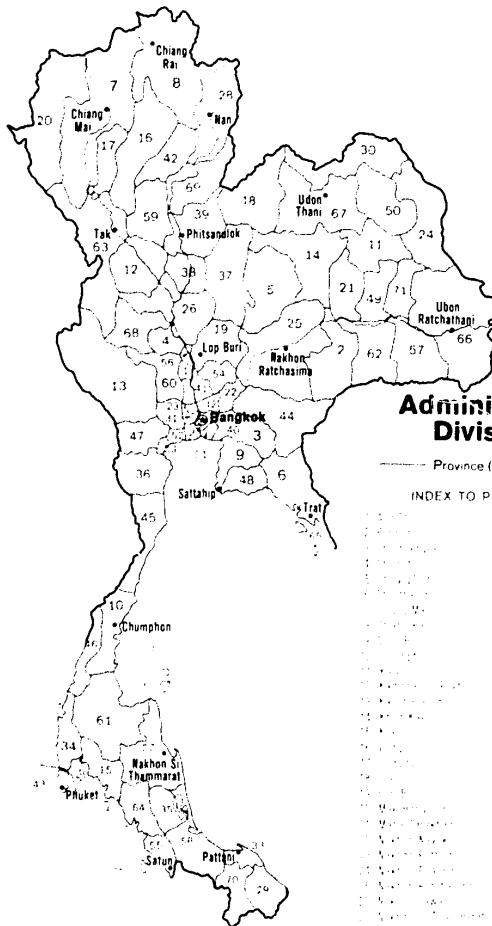


- Agricultural area (mainly rice)
- Tropical evergreen forest
- Teak forest
- Broadleaf deciduous forest
- Coniferous forest
- Mangrove



Ethnic Groups

- TAI**
 - Thai, Phu Thai
- SINO-TIBETAN**
 - Karen
 - Lahu
 - Lisu
 - Meo
 - ▲ Chinese
- AUSTRASIATIC**
 - Khmer
 - Khmu, Lawa
 - Vietnamese
- MALAYO-POLYNESIAN**
 - Malays
 - Chaonam (Moken)
 - ▲ Other ethnic group



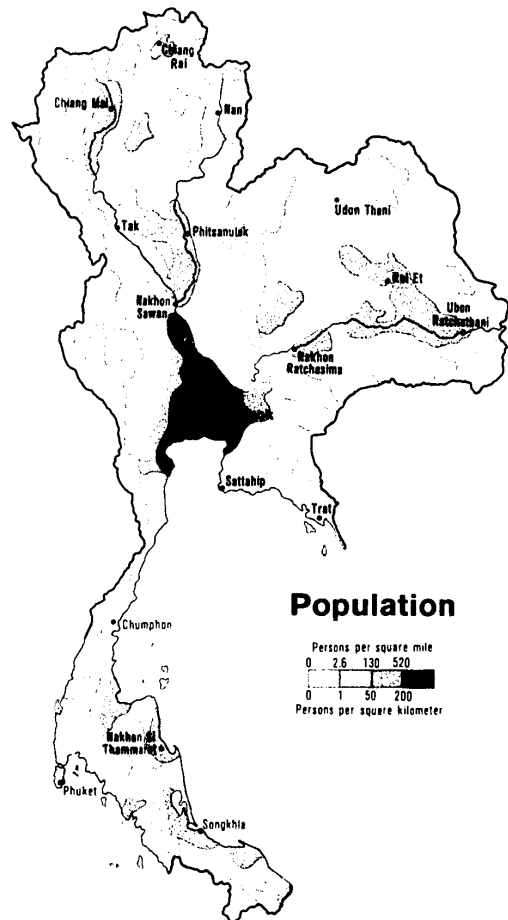
Administrative Divisions

Province (changwat) boundary

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5. Danang	25. Nakhon Phanom
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15. Kanchi	35. Nakhon Phanom
16. Kanchi	36. Nakhon Phanom
17. Kanchi	37. Nakhon Phanom
18. Kanchi	38. Nakhon Phanom
19. Kanchi	39. Nakhon Phanom
20. Kanchi	40. Nakhon Phanom

Note: Provinces have the same names as their capitals, except Phra Nakhon whose capital is in Bangkok.



Population

Persons per square mile
0 25 100 500
Persons per square kilometer
0 10 50 200

Summary Map